



State Senator

February 13, 2004

VALDE GARCIA

*Serving the 22<sup>nd</sup> District*

*Shiawassee-Livingston-southern Ingham counties*

## Coffee Break News

### **Governor's budget proposal is light on spending cuts**

The state Senate is committed to balancing the fiscal year 2005 budget by doing what is right for the people of Michigan and not what is easiest for state government. Senate Republicans will carefully review Gov. Granholm's budget proposal in terms of how it will address both Michigan's short-term budget problems and long-term economic competitiveness and job opportunities. There are concerns that the governor has shifted the burden for balancing the budget on to college students, growing school districts and homeowners.

### **Tax Relief for Economic Expansion**

Senate Republicans this week passed a package of bills designed to help start-up businesses succeed, strengthening Michigan's economic future. The 13-bill package — referred to as Tax Relief for Economic Expansion — supports new fast growing, high-tech research companies. TREE will assist these start-up companies by exempting them from property taxes as well as state and city income taxes for the first five years. Businesses qualified as a "start-up" also would be exempt from the Single Business Tax (SBT) — during their first five years — in the years they do not make a profit. The first few years are the toughest for a new venture, with only 50 percent of small businesses succeeding more than four years. Senate Bills 862-873 and 875 will help those who are helping themselves and others to a more stable future in Michigan.

### **Senate approves grandparent visitation bill**

Legislation allowing grandparents to seek visitation orders received unanimous support in the Michigan Senate Wednesday. A 2003 decision by the Michigan Supreme Court struck down the state's law allowing grandparents to seek visitation. The law was invalidated because it did not accord sufficient deference to a parent's decision against such visitation. Senate Bill 727 was crafted to address the concerns raised by the justices in their decision. SB 727, supported by the Michigan Coalition Against Domestic Violence and the Family Law Section of the State Bar of Michigan, now goes before the House for consideration.

### **Preparing for marriage**

Michigan lawmakers this week announced a broad, bipartisan package of legislation designed to prepare couples for stronger marriages and, in a case of divorce, lessen the negative effect on children. Senators said that by helping increase the number of successful marriages, the number of happy, healthy children would increase as well. Other parts of the legislative package allow a clergy member to continue to legally offer marriage counseling after retirement, require a parenting plan before a divorce is granted; provide a marriage preservation tax credit and promote divorce-effects education programs.

### **Child passenger safety legislation**

In observation of National Child Passenger Safety Week, the Senate introduced a package of bills designed to keep children safer while traveling and penalize parents for endangering their children. The bills would require booster seats for children under 4 feet, 9 inches and between 40 and 80 pounds and would increase fines and points for failure to abide by Michigan's restraint requirements. The legislation also would provide a waiver of fines or assessments if evidence is produced of acquiring a child safety seat meeting Michigan's requirements. Motor vehicle accidents remain the leading cause of accidental death for children age 15 years and younger, according to the Michigan Office of Highway Safety Planning.